



**U.S. Dept. of Commerce  
NOAA, National Weather Service  
Offices Serving New York State**

**New York State  
Disaster Preparedness  
Commission**



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## **NEW YORK STATE WEATHER WARNING TESTS SCHEDULED**

ALBANY – The 15<sup>th</sup> annual statewide hazardous weather drill is scheduled for March 18 and 20. On those days, the five National Weather Service (NWS) offices serving New York State will issue test-warning messages for hazardous weather threats that develop rapidly.

Specifically, a test severe thunderstorm warning will be issued on March 18 and a test tornado warning will be issued on March 20.

This drill is being conducted in cooperation with the New York State Disaster Preparedness Commission, comprised of state agencies such as the Division of State Police, the State Department of Education, and the State Emergency Management Office.

Governor George E. Pataki has recognized the importance of the communications drill by officially proclaiming March 16-22, 2003 as Weather Hazards Awareness Week in New York State.

“New York State is fortunate to have an effective warning system in place that operates in conjunction with the National Weather Service to give advance notice to localities when hazardous weather is expected,” Governor Pataki said.

“But the need to conduct these annual communications drills is all the more important when we stop to consider some of the events which occurred in the Empire State in just this past year,” the Governor said.

Among those weather events were a series of intense snowstorms beginning Christmas Eve, with record-setting amounts of snow, which seriously impacted eastern and central portions of the state by disrupting vital transportation and public safety systems. The storms were so intense that a major portion of the New York State Thruway, from Exit 21 (Catskill) to Exit 34A (Syracuse) was closed for nearly seven hours on Christmas night. More than 30,000 customers lost power as a result of the following January 3 storm.

Thousands of State employees and thousands of pieces of equipment were mobilized during the storms joining an activation of all local snow fighting and other emergency forces throughout central and eastern sections of the State. The National Weather Service provided forecasts and warnings with significant lead times, which helped State agencies in carrying out their emergency plans.

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State Department of Transportation and New York State Thruway crews worked around the clock. The Governor implemented the State Emergency Operations Plan and activated the State Emergency Operations Center at the Albany headquarters of the State Emergency Management Office (SEMO), from which State storm operations were monitored and coordinated.

“The State and local response has been effective in helping New Yorkers during times of need,” Governor Pataki said. “That is a result of years of planning and training among State, local and federal agencies, volunteer organizations and the private sector.”

Communications capabilities for warning dissemination will be tested across the Empire State as well as in several adjacent states in the March 18 and 20 drills. These capabilities include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Weather Radio and Weather Wire Service, the emergency management’s community’s National Warning System (NAWAS) and the New York Statewide Police Information Network (NYSPIN). NAWAS and NYSPIN are New York’s official emergency management information communication systems for state agencies and local officials.

Internally, the communications drills will give National Weather Service staffs the opportunity to practice skills usually applied under stress. Externally, the statewide drill gives public safety and preparedness officials, the broadcast media and all New Yorkers the opportunity to test their planned methods of receiving emergency weather messages. It also affords the opportunity to test plans for responding to a weather emergency.

In the event hazardous weather actually threatens on any scheduled drill day, the drill for that day will be postponed until the same day the following week.